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ABSTRACT

The monograph is intended to help administrators clarify issues regarding mainstreaming in preschool education. Four chapters are presented as outgrowths of a workshop on preschool mainstreaming. The first, "Fundamental Issues in Preschool Mainstreaming," by M. Guralnick, focuses on four issues: (1) understanding the purposes of mainstreaming; (2) evaluating its feasibility for a preschool program; (3) determining an appropriate mainstream setting for a child; and (4) finding and creating opportunities to mainstream preschoolers. "Personal Training for Mainstreaming Young Handicapped Children," by N. Peterson, lists specific training needs as viewed from perspectives of preschool teachers, administrators responsible for training, and parents. In "Child Characteristics and Outcomes Related to Mainstreaming," P. Strain and L. Cordisco address issues of instructional decisions and curriculum adaptations. The final chapter, "Parents and Preschool Mainstreaming," by D. Cansler and P. Winton, includes discussions of the impact of mainstreaming on parents as well as the impact of parents on mainstreaming. (CL)

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Mainstreaming In Early Education

edited by
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The U.S. Department of Education (through Special Education Programs -- SEP) contracts TADS to provide information services to demonstration projects of the U.S. Handicapped Children's Early Education Program (HCEEP). Information services are provided through the preparation and distribution of monographs. Topics address critical issues and challenges that confront the projects. Ideas for topics and contributors are are most welcome.

* * *

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March 1983

Mainstreaming In Early Education

edited by
Joan Anderson and Talbot Black

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Mainstreaming presents special issues, problems, and opportunities to the administrator who wishes to integrate his or her program for handicapped and nonhandicapped preschoolers. What must that administrator consider as he or she plans a mainstream preschool program? Indeed, how will the administrator decide whether or not mainstreaming will work for a particular program? Problematic issues are numerous, complex, and often difficult to sort. Decisions about whether or not or how to conduct a mainstream program require weighing alternatives and sometimes choosing among important educational goals. Likewise, the decision to place a preschool handicapped child in a mainstream setting requires consideration of many factors concerning the child's and the family's needs.

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of this book is to help administrators sort out the key issues related to preschool mainstreaming so they can make informed decisions about their programs and the children they serve. Chapters identify and organize several issues for the reader. The text provides perspective on the issues but does not seek to provide answers. Neither does this book attempt to take a stand for or against mainstreaming preschool children. Rather, the intent is to help the reader examine those issues that he or she should consider when making program decisions regarding preschool mainstreaming.

The book has been written first and foremost for administrators who are responsible for the early education of handicapped children. It should also be useful to preschool teachers and parents of young handicapped children, since they, too, face most of the issues discussed.

Organization

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter One deals with four fundamental programmatic issues: understanding the purposes of mainstreaming; evaluating the feasibility of mainstreaming for a preschool program; determining an appropriate mainstream setting for a child; and finding and creating opportunities to mainstream preschoolers.

Chapter Two addresses the issue of personnel training (perhaps the most important issue facing administrators and preschool teachers) by first describing idiosyncrasies in early childhood mainstreaming that affect personnel training and then listing specific training needs as viewed from three perspectives: those of preschool teachers, administrators responsible for training, and parents.

Chapter Three focuses on the child. The chapter examines the handicapped child's characteristics and likelihood for success or difficulty in a mainstream program, an important factor when deciding whether or not to mainstream. The chapter explores how and to what degree the child's characteristics can shape instructional decisions once he or she is in a mainstream setting, and which parts of a mainstream curriculum are particularly relevant for handicapped preschools. Chapter Three also identifies some questions whose answers could increase our understanding of the factors that ensure a successful mainstream placement.

Chapter Four explores the much-neglected area of family concerns related to preschool mainstreaming. The author discusses the impact of mainstreaming on the parents of handicapped and nonhandicapped children, pointing out that mainstreaming can sometimes be beneficial for the child and yet difficult for the parents. The chapter includes a discussion of the impact parents can have on a mainstream program. Suggestions for facilitating mainstreaming are presented. Strategies that focus on preparing parents and children for mainstreaming as well as strategies to provide ongoing support in the mainstream are delineated.

How This Book Was Developed

The idea for this book was born as plans for a workshop on mainstreaming preschool handicapped children were being made. The workshop planning committee (brought together by TADS) wrestled with the question of how to explore the many issues they had identified and then communicate the results to a wider audience. The planning committee decided to set aside the day before the workshop for an in-depth discussion of those issues and to invite to that "day of discussion" individuals with extensive, but differing, experiences in preschool mainstreaming.

To assure a range of perspectives, the 26 participants included individuals who had conducted research, designed and provided training, and developed and administered exemplary programs in preschool mainstreaming. The group reflected the perspectives of state educa-

tion agencies, local education agencies, Head Start programs, private daycare providers, universities, and parents of handicapped children. Most participants brought experience in two or more of these areas. The participants are introduced in the following section, "About the Discussants."

The participants were organized into discussion groups and assigned a cluster of issues (e.g., general programmatic and administrative concerns, child concerns, family concerns, and training concerns). Chairpersons were appointed for each group, and a set of specific questions was sent to the members of each group to help them prepare for the discussion. The chapters are based in large measure on what was shared during the respective discussions.

THE DISCUSSANTS

JOAN D. ANDERSON, Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of North Carolina, is a Technical Assistance Coordinator at TADS and shared responsibility for planning and conducting the workshop that provided the basis for this document. Her other TADS publications include Curricula for High-Risk and Handicapped Infants and Special Education Mandated from Birth.

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Chapter 1

Fundamental Issues in Preschool Mainstreaming

by Michael J. Guralnick

Chapter 1

Fundamental Issues in Preschool Mainstreaming

The concept and practice of mainstreaming continue to be among the most controversial issues in the field of education and child development. At first glance it seems unusual that a concept designed to encourage educational programs to accommodate both handicapped and nonhandicapped children in the same setting would engender such intense controversy. This is especially the case at the preschool level, since programs tend to be flexible, qualities other than academic achievement are of primary concern, developmental differences occur widely as part of the natural course of events, a range of chronological ages is often represented in the program, and children's ideas with regard to the meaning of individual differences seem more malleable. Yet a careful analysis of the implications of mainstreaming reveals that it does in fact pose significant challenges to existing practices. Issues of staff training, resource allocation, institutional change, and parental versus child needs; developmental issues of potential benefit or harm; and legal and administrative problems are only a few indications of the difficult questions raised by the prospect of mainstreaming. But perhaps more important, for many individuals mainstreaming challenges established attitudes and values.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSES OF MAINSTREAMING

Insight into the purposes of mainstreaming can be obtained from rationales that have been proposed by various individuals and groups, including parents, educators, researchers, administrators, professional organizations, and public officials. Here is a sampling of comments:

- "Specialized or segregated education has not worked. Children do not progress any better in these settings."
- "Separation is second-class citizenship and results in fewer resources and a lower quality of education."
- "The historical and natural prejudices of society against difference cannot be countered unless constructive and meaningful opportunities for contact with handicapped children are provided."
- "Fear of someone who is different can only be alleviated through experience with that person."
- "Attitudes toward the handicapped form at early ages. Mainstreaming must occur no later than during the preschool years."
- "Variations in human development occur on a continuum, and there is no discrete point at which individuals can be characterized as handicapped."
- "Labelling young children is a questionable practice. It is imprecise and can harm children by becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy."
- "Prosocial behaviors of empathy, helping, and cooperating can be fostered in nonhandicapped children in mainstreamed settings."
- "Mainstreamed environments are more stimulating and challenging than special environments."
- "All children need models to encourage development, and mainstreamed settings provide better models for handicapped children than do segregated settings."

- "Social skills are best learned through active interaction with highly responsive, normally developing children."
- "Friendships between handicapped and nonhandicapped children can only form if they have shared experiences."
- "Mainstreamed classes tend to focus more on the strengths rather than on the weaknesses of children."
- "Learning to cope with people and environments handicapped children will encounter throughout their lives cannot occur too soon."
- "Teachers and parents set more realistic expectations for children in mainstreamed settings."

From this sampling of statements supporting mainstreaming, two themes emerge. The first theme reflects the humanistic and and social goals of mainstreaming. Efforts to improve children's understanding of individual differences; to foster helping behaviors, friendships, and acceptance; and to modify attitudes reflect these bases. The second theme is found in contentions that effective educational and developmental programs can be carried out in a mainstreamed setting, with unique potential benefits to handicapped children resulting from participation in such a setting. That mainstreaming provides a more stimulating environment, teaches skills for coping with difficult situations, and provides the opportunity to learn appropriate social skills; and that there is no advantage in specialized programs, are examples of comments consistent with this latter theme.

Balancing Two Principles Established by Law

In addition to educational rationales, there arose a legal incentive for mainstreaming from a variety of court decisions and legislative enactments. The legal basis for educating handicapped and nonhandicapped children in the same setting is, of course, found in P.L. 94-142, which directs educators to place handicapped children in the least restrictive environment. Specifically, the law states that each public agency is responsible for ensuring:

> that to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not

> handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Other provisions of the law specify that in addition to taking place in the least restrictive environment, the education must be appropriate. In a sense, these two principles -- least restrictive placement and providing an appropriate education -- serve to balance the importance of children participating in as typical a setting as possible with their need for a specialized educational environment and services.

The least restrictive principle can be aligned with the theme of humanistic and social goals in mainstreaming, and the concept of appropriateness parallels the theme of providing a sound educational/developmental experience for handicapped children. A parallel between these principles and the two themes that emerged in rationale statements can be noted.

The mechanism for balancing these goals can be found in the individualized educational program (IEP) developed for each handicapped child. Since numerous factors must be considered in order to accommodate these two principles in practice and to truly individualize education, a continuum of program alternatives must be available. (This is true whether or not mainstreaming programs are carried out within the framework of P.L. 94-142.)

At one end of the continuum is the enrollment of handicapped children in regular nursery or preschool programs. In this situation, the staff usually consists of early childhood educators with little or no specific training in the field of special education. Handicapped children usually constitute anywhere from five to twenty percent of the class. Specialists are available; certain environmental, equipment, and program accommodations are made; and IEPs are carried out within the framework of general class routines. Apart from these modifications, handicapped children are considered as full and integral members of the class and are expected to adopt and comply with the rules and patterns established by that program's model.

At the other end of the continuum, with respect to degree of interaction, are programs designed specially for handicapped children which include specific experiences with nonhandicapped children in nearby settings. These programs may be referred to as "integrated," rather than "mainstreamed," and the staff members have training in special education -- perhaps with backgrounds combining early childhood and special education. Routines are clearly established by the principles and practices defined by the special program. Contact with nonhandicapped children is usually limited to unstructured and less formal situations such as play, snacks, or field trips. Although nonhandicapped children may participate at other times and in other activities, their primary classroom remains the regular nursery.

Variations which exist between these two extremes include programs that alter the proportions of the above features. If the physical setting and other relationships permit, arrangements can be made for some handicapped children primarily enrolled in specialized settings to spend substantial portions of their day in a regular nursery. Similarly, handicapped children enrolled in a regular nursery may be able to participate in needed specialized and intensive activities with other handicapped children in a specialized program for certain portions of their day.

Although an array of possibilities may be conceived as truly integrated (where the identities of two separate programs appear to blend toegether), this is rarely the case, and a primary placement for each child is almost always established. That primary placement decision has many significant implications. Not only is the staffing pattern different for specialized and regular early education programs, but the type of administrative organization, the funding source, and even the type of educational model provided usually differs for these two types of primary placements.

Perhaps as a means of countering some of these restrictions, an alternative has developed which is unique to early childhood programs. Generally referred to as "reverse mainstreaming," the primary program is a specialized one for handicapped children. However, in contrast to other models, normally developing children are enrolled full-time in the program and usually constitute 30 to 50 percent of the total number of children. The staffing pattern may mix early childhood and special education teachers, but the dominant program is geared to the handicapped children.

Mainstreaming -- A Decision-Making Process

Mainstreaming is first and foremost a dynamic and ongoing decision-making process that addresses the individual needs of children. This process is guided by two goals. The first goal is to maximize a handicapped child's participation and involvement with nonhandicapped children. This must be consistent with the humanistic and social goals of mainstreaming that stress access, social integration, and the formation of appropriate attitudes. The second goal is to ensure that every child receives the most appropriate education possible. Careful reviews of program options, possible modifications, and resources needed are essential parts of this process.

In some instances, these two goals coincide; in other instances compromise must be made. Furthermore, although changes in programs must be made to accommodate handicapped children and additional resources are often needed, mainstreaming does not require a radical departure from a program's original goals and orientation. Finally, mainstreaming encourages the development of new and creative models for serving handicapped children and their families.

EVALUATING A MAINSTREAM PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The objectives and related evaluation of mainstreamed programs can be organized around two general questions:

* Does the program meet the educational and developmental needs of all children in the program while retaining the fundamental assumptions and structural integrity of the program's model?

* Is the program compatible with the humanistic and social goals of mainstreaming?

Specific Evaluation Questions

Direct observations, assessments by staff, inspection of records, child performance ratings, and interviews with children are all straightforward techniques for evaluating the effectiveness of mainstreaming. The following questions relate to the issues of

keeping the program's original model intact and meeting the educational and developmental needs of all children:

* Does the daily "flow" of activities occur as usual?

* Do administrators and teachers feel their activities are compatible with their program's theoretical approach to education and development?

* Has a comprehensive assessment of each child's development been carried out?

* Are the IEPs feasible, particularly those related to social development, and are they being achieved at an acceptable rate?

* Are adequate support services available for children with special needs?

* Are all children receiving the kinds of attention they need?

* Do interactions seem comfortable, and is the emotional climate warm and accepting?

* Do the parents of both handicapped and nonhandicapped children seem satisfied?

If the answer to all of these questions is "yes," then there is every indication that the mainstream program will meet the educational and developmental needs of all children and will retain the fundamental assumptions and structural integrity of the original model.

The following questions relate to the unique circumstances that exist in mainstream classrooms that are likely to support the development of handicapped children:

* Are nonhandicapped children responsive to, and do they adjust their communicative interactions and styles in accordance with their companion's developmental level or type of handicap? (For example, changes in the use of gestures or variations in the choice of complex syntactical forms can stimulate communicative development.)

* Do parallel play activities include both handicapped and nonhandicapped children, and are there a sufficient number of situations where modelling of advanced social, linguistic, and play behaviors occurs?

* Are there sufficient opportunities for nonhandicapped children to act as tutors or agents of change in appropriate educational or therapeutic activities?

The following questions relate to the task of assuring that the program is compatible with the humanistic and social goals of mainstreaming:

* Are there sufficient instances of positive social interactions between handicapped and nonhandicapped children?

* Are handicapped children included in many of the usual group play activities?

* Is there a general absence of inappropriate comments or signs of rejection of the handicapped children by their nonhandicapped classmates?

* Do nonhandicapped children adjust their social and play activities to try to include the handicapped children?

* Is there evidence that nonhandicapped children see the strengths as well as the deficits of the handicapped children?

Judging Humanistic and Social Goals

Evaluating attainment of the humanistic and social goals of mainstreaming is a subjective and difficult task. Teachers and administrators have formed clear criteria for determining if IEP objectives are being met. And, they have fairly well-developed expectations with regard to program flow, the distribution of teacher activities, etc. Experienced teachers are also likely to have a firm perspective in social development, including peer-related social development. However, although issues of social integration and attitudes related to handicapped children are considered by many proponents to be the cornerstone of mainstreaming, teachers and administrators have far less understanding of these aspects of mainstreaming.

Some guidance for judging whether mainstreaming is working in this regard can be provided by emphasizing the multidimensional nature of the term "social integration." At one level, the term implies social interaction; acceptance of and participation with handicapped children in joint activities is another level. Actual friendship is perhaps the highest form of social integration that can occur between handicapped and nonhandicapped children.

At our present stage of understanding, rules governing judgments of this matter are simply not available. How much social integration defines an effective program? In how many activities must handicapped children be involved to be considered "accepted"? No hard and fast rules are to be found. We may have to be content with considering programs as effective if: 1) all children appear to be forming social relationships and developing social skills at a rate expected for their own level and limitations (goals related to appropriateness); and 2) handicapped children are not experiencing undue rejection or isolation from the larger peer group.

It is important to remember that many handicapped children find it difficult to establish effective peer relationships in any setting. These developmental expectations must be considered in the judgment process. Clusters of children form along many dimensions -- age, attractiveness, socioeconomic status, sex, physical skills, etc. That these clusters form and may not generally include certain handicapped children should not necessarily be viewed as a failure of mainstreaming but can be seen as a reflection of normal processes of interpersonal attraction. Handicapped children may well form their own "handicapped" clusters, as they would in specialized settings, and the clusters may vary from activity to activity. Concern is justified if mainstreaming creates a situation which isolates certain children and prohibits natural groupings and regroupings.

Assessments of Children

A series of child assessments can be made as a final check for the effectiveness of mainstreaming. Standardized or criterion-referenced instruments usually used by a program can serve as a basis to determine if children are progressing. Normative expectations, projections based on a child's previous levels of development, and similar estimates can provide useful guides to judge how well children have progressed. Often administered on a pre- and posttest basis, the selection of instruments will vary from program to program and will emphasize the primary goals of that

model. Yet for those interested in a more systematic assessment of their mainstreaming efforts, administrators and teachers should attend to the following:

- Since mainstreaming has strong expectations (and concerns) in relation to a child's social development, it is wise to include standardized measures that reflect this developmental domain. Personal characteristics such as creativity, resiliency, problem-solving orientation, independence, willingness to explore, and social competence in general should also be assessed.

- Similarly, various sociometric techniques that assess peer acceptance and peer preference (peer ratings, peer nominations, and teacher ratings) may be useful.

- Summary reports from specialists following the child (e.g., physical therapists) should be obtained to ensure that these areas have been attended to satisfactorily.

Adjusting Expectations to Various Program Options

Despite the wide array of program options to mainstream or integrate, most observers agree that goals should remain the same, even if the handicapped child spends only one-half hour daily integrated with nonhandicapped children. We still must meet all the educational, developmental, and social needs of that child.

Though the general goals of mainstreaming remain the same, our expectations should vary with the program option. The formation of true friendships or the degree of social acceptance that can be expected will vary with the extent of contact between handicapped and nonhandicapped children. For a program in which integration occurs only during free play, for example, handicapped children are likely to be perceived as that "other" group.

DETERMINING AN APPROPRIATE MAINSTREAM SETTING

A mainstream setting may present certain disadvantages for the handicapped child. Highly intensive and individualized therapy or instruction may not be available in a regular nursery. The social competence that can emerge from the mainstream experience

may or may not offset the absence of these specialized services. In theory, trade-offs need not occur. In practice, however, the array of quality options is never sufficient, and goals often seem incompatible with one another. Parents, teachers, and administrators constantly face difficult placement decisions.

Sometimes, reasonable arguments can suggest that a decision to mainstream a child may pose certain hazards:

* "The handicapped child's self-esteem can be permanently injured by continual failure to live up to the standards of his or her peers."

* "Mainstream programs can be highly restrictive, since fewer 'peers' are available for establishing positive social relationships."

* "Highly specialized services cannot be provided in most normal nursery settings."

* "It can be demeaning and disruptive to shift children to another class during play and lunch."

* "Regular early childhood teachers are not trained to work with handicapped children and are not confident of their skills in this area."

* "Nonhandicapped children can lose out, since so much time and energy must be devoted to the few who are handicapped."

* "Fear, negativism, and cruelty often characterize the relationships between handicapped and nonhandicapped children, much more so than acceptance, understanding, and support."

* "Handicapped children need structure and direction. Mainstream environments can be overly stimulating and disorienting."

These descriptions of mainstreaming are all plausible. Those who have developed mainstream programs recognize that there is often a fine line that separates those instances in which mainstreaming succeeds from those in which the experience is highly unsatisfactory from all points of view. Success or failure is, however, well within one's understanding and control. Specifically, whether or not placement of a child in a mainstream setting is appropriate depends to a large extent on well-informed assessments

of key program factors. By evaluating each factor in relation to the range of program options available, effective placement decisions can be made. Brief descriptions of some key factors are noted below.

Quality of the Program --
There is, of course, no substitute for a thoughtfully designed, well-organized program. Systems of in-service training, parent involvement, staff supervision, and data collection; a well-articulated and coherently presented philosophy; and corresponding goals and objectives are only a few of the characteristics that should be evident.

Developmental Model of the Program --
Various program philosophies and orientations (e.g., Montessori, cognitive, behavioral) may differ in terms of their ability to meet the needs of handicapped children. Careful attention should be paid to the extent and nature of classroom activities (e.g., degree of structure associated with each model) to determine that program which is most suitable to a child's learning style and developmental needs.

Spatial Layout of the Classroom, Toy Selection, and Other Structural Factors --
An examination of the physical characteristics of the classroom can provide an important insight into whether a child can be effectively served by the program. Safety is, of course, one consideration. In addition, space and equipment arrangements can indicate the extent to which social interactions will be fostered. An important question to ask is: "Can existing spaces be modified to meet any special needs?"

Level of Teacher Training and Preparation for Mainstreaming --
As in any classroom, the teacher determines the effectiveness of a program. In mainstream programs, a teacher's attitude, sensitivity, and willingness to explore new models, curricula, and teaching techniques may distinguish success from failure. Careful consideration of the experience and type of teacher training, and particularly the teacher's preparation for mainstreaming, is essential. These factors indicate an interest in mainstreaming and the confidence a teacher likely will have in a heterogeneous group of children.

Staff/Child Ratio --
Sufficient staff must be available to ensure that all children receive adequate attention. Staff members must know how to individualize programs. One factor to consider is the availability of aides or volunteers who can help maintain the flow of classroom activities.

Resource Personnel --
The availability of specialists from different disciplines is common in specialized programs. Arrangements must be made for either direct services or consultation to teaching staff to ensure that the multidisciplinary program required for most handicapped children can be implemented in a mainstream setting.

Ratio of Handicapped to Nonhandicapped Children --
Assessment of this factor helps to determine the primary focus of the program and corresponding staffing patterns and has important social development implications. When handicapped children are a small minority in a classroom, limits may be placed on possible peer relationships.

Severity of Handicap --
Perhaps the most significant factor is the severity of a child's handicap. This factor is so pervasive that it affects the extent of the modifications that may be necessary in virtually all other areas. Judgments of the willingness and capability of a program to adjust to children whose handicaps vary in terms of severity are important when deciding the degree to which a particular child can benefit from that program.

Preparation of Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Children --
Particularly for children with significant handicaps, the efforts a program makes to ensure that nonhandicapped children clearly understand the nature of handicapping conditions and the program's plans for activities to debunk myths and alleviate fears should be examined. Moreover, programs should be assessed in terms of how they propose to prepare the handicapped children for mainstreaming. The handicapped child's ability to cope with difficult questions from classmates, negative comments, or staring could be enhanced by thoughtful and sensitive preparation.

Chronological Age of Participants --
Especially for children with developmental delays, the chronological ages of children in the program should be considered. The presence of children at similar developmental levels should help foster social integration and the formation of peer relationships.

Interpersonal Skills of Children --
Negative styles of interacting and of children's orientation to peers (anxious, rejecting, withdrawn, overactive) can, of course, interfere with any carefully developed program. If extremes of these interpersonal behaviors are present, alternative placements and therapies should be considered.

A list such as this is certainly not exhaustive but can help to sensitize administrators, parents, and teachers to some of the key factors that should influence the placement of a child in a mainstream setting.

Placement decisions are highly personal and subjective; they rely on experience and clinical judgment or intuition, and they are often influenced by competing thoughts and feelings that are difficult to articulate. Gathering the information is a major task and requires extensive and unabashed probing to learn what a program currently offers and the extent to which the program is able and willing to extend itself. In all instances, it is important to be well-informed, honest, realistic, humane, fair, and, of course, willing to make the hard decisions.

FINDING AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAINSTREAMING

Most states and local communities do not provide public education for nonhandicapped preschool children, so mainstreaming options for preschoolers are limited. Even if a school system does develop some limited programs for nonhandicapped preschoolers in order to provide a mainstream environment for handicapped children, it seems inevitable that legal issues would be raised concerning criteria used to select the nonhandicapped children.

How then can local systems and agencies provide mainstream experiences below regular school age? A number of possibilities exist, but each requires the formation of new relationships and new modes of interagency collaboration. For example, public schools can:

* contract with agencies or organizations (Head Start, day care centers) that can provide a mainstream environment;

* develop some preschool programs for limited populations of nonhandicapped children in order to provide a mainstream environment for the handicapped preschoolers who must be served;

* enter into jointly funded and controlled preschool programs which meet both private preschool obligations and public school handicap requirements and objectives;

* enlist community and parent support and establish some volunteer efforts to create integrated preschool experiences.

Other public and private agencies serving handicapped preschoolers can cooperate with day care agencies, private nurseries, or other programs to provide contact with nonhandicapped children.

Clearly, interagency ventures can be difficult to set up and carry out. Coordination problems are often compounded by the fact that a contractual relationship between agencies serving handicapped children raises issues of staff qualifications, performance standards, monitoring, and evaluation. Requirements in these areas may be perceived as infringements on the rights of nursery schools or day care programs to operate as they see fit, making them less willing to include handicapped preschoolers in their programs.

SUMMARY

Mainstreaming at the preschool level involves a decision-making process that seeks to find the right balance between two goals: 1) providing educational and developmental experiences most appropriate for each handicapped preschooler; and 2) providing the greatest opportunity for each handicapped preschooler to enjoy the benefits of interacting with and relating to nonhandicapped peers.

These two goals are often, but not always, compatible. To determine which programs and children are suitable for mainstreaming, many factors must be considered. The effectiveness of a particular mainstreaming program should be judged by how well it

meets the educational needs of all the children involved while maintaining the integrity of its basic educational model, and by how compatible its operations are with the social and humanistic goals of mainstreaming. Determining the appropriateness of a mainstream setting for a given child requires a careful examination of several factors. Providing mainstream opportunities for handicapped preschoolers is difficult, since public schools do not typically provide the settings for integrating handicapped and nonhandicapped preschoolers. Creative strategies to foster interagency planning and coordination are therefore essential.

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Chapter 2

Personnel Training for Mainstreaming Young Handicapped Children

by Nancy L. Peterson

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Personnel Training for Mainstreaming Young Handicapped Children

The concept of mainstreaming has had a significant impact on our current educational values and practices. An outgrowth of a changing philosophy about the purposes of education, about what constitutes a worthwhile educational curriculum, and about the rights of handicapped persons, mainstreaming has fueled the fires for further change. Consequently, as handicapped and nonhandicapped children are now being integrated in educational settings, a great many human service personnel face new professional responsibilities. They find themselves working in expanded job roles, in new types of service arrangements, and with a changing population of children.

How does all this affect personnel training? What new training needs are being created as professionals are asked to work with combined groups of handicapped and nonhandicapped youngsters? How can training be made available to the thousands of practitioners who are becoming a part of mainstreaming programs? This chapter will explore these questions by:

- identifying some of the unique conditions and special considerations that affect the planning and delivery of training to personnel who work with very young children;
- examining some of the training needs created by mainstreaming as it applies to early childhood centers serving handicapped and nonhandicapped children under school age;

- identifying some of the issues that must be addressed as attempts are made to deal with large-scale training requirements created by early childhood mainstreaming.

THE ROLE OF PERSONNEL TRAINING IN MAINSTREAMING

The volumes of articles and books on the topic of mainstreaming and the abundance of presentations at professional conferences show how popular the mainstreaming concept has become. Mainstreaming is viewed as a viable alternative for serving a large proportion of handicapped students in our elementary schools and is now being extended downward into preschool and day-care programs for younger children. Yet popularity and widespread acclaim alone do not guarantee the success of a new educational approach. Ideas often become popular topics of discussion long before their merits have been fully tested in the field. The history of education is filled with examples of innovations which have been considered the antidote to problems or limitations in our educational practices. Many have become the catch-words of their day, bandwagons onto which enthusiastic converts could climb --with or without a full understanding of the concept or the responsibilities involved. Looking back across the decades, we see that many popular educational innovations have come and gone, leaving behind disappointment and unfulfilled expectations. Some innovative ideas simply fail to materialize into actual practices that match the idealized claims of their proponents. Poor implementation sometimes has resulted in a backlash of opposition because of undesirable outcomes or public/professional disillusionment about the merits of a new approach. Discarded, such "discredited" approaches are replaced by new ideas, acclaimed to be better, more appropriate solutions to the problems of educating children, and the cycle repeats itself. Given this history, it is tempting to speculate on the ultimate fate of mainstreaming. If popularity is not the key to the success of a new approach such as mainstreaming, what factors do shape the outcome in real practice?

The Bottom Line for Success -- Prepared Personnel

While there has been much research on the issue of mainstreaming older students in elementary or secondary schools, much less is known about the outcomes of mainstreaming for very young children -- handicapped or nonhandicapped. The true test of

mainstreaming lies not in the soundness of its logic nor in its popularity in professional journals or on the lecture circuit. Neither does its test lie in the eloquence of those who argue its merits or in the enthusiasm of practitioners who adopt it. The real test of mainstreaming is in its day-to-day operation in preschool and day-care centers and in early intervention programs. Only there, as young handicapped children are cared for and taught alongside their normally developing peers, can we observe the outcomes of this approach. Only in practice can we ascertain whether the purposes of early intervention can be achieved within the context of the mainstream environment. Only through application can we find the answers to questions like these:

- Can teachers in regular early education programs provide the extra stimulation and special training handicapped children need?

- Do handicapped children obtain the benefits of early intervention in settings with nonhandicapped peers, or do they require a special setting where the entire program can be devoted to their special needs?

- Can teachers provide beneficial early education to the normally developing children in a mainstream setting?

The answers to these questions fall largely upon the shoulders of those who staff early childhood programs. Their actions set the atmosphere that communicates to a child and his or her parents that the inclusion of handicapped children with nonhandicapped peers is either an imposition or a welcome event. Thus, when all the fanfare and rhetoric about mainstreaming are peeled away, one stark reality remains: The final test of mainstreaming rests with the ability and attitude of the teachers and others who implement the programs; it is they who must translate theory into practice. If they cannot accept the idea, if they do not have the know-how and the teaching and management skills to meet the diverse needs of a mixed group of handicapped and nonhandicapped children, then mainstreaming will not work. No matter how progressive and innovative an idea, its use becomes limited when there are few practitioners who understand and can properly implement the idea. Thus, the preparation and training of personnel holds a pivotal role in early childhood mainstreaming. Well-trained personnel are at the heart of a successful mainstreaming effort.

PREPARATION FOR WHAT? WHAT DOES MAINSTREAMING REALLY IMPLY?

A helpful definition for clarifying the intent and purpose of mainstreaming is offered by Kaufman et al. (1975):

> Mainstreaming refers to the temporal, instructional, and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers based on an ongoing, individually determined educational planning and programming process and requires clarification of responsibility among regular and special education, administrative, instructional, and support personnel.
>
> (pp. 40-41)

Kaufman et al. elaborate on their definition by noting that successful mainstreaming encompasses three major components:

Real Integration of Handicapped and Nonhandicapped Children Must Occur

This can happen in several ways. First, handicapped and nonhandicapped children must be temporally integrated. That is, they must spend a meaningful amount of time learning and playing together. Second, the handicapped and nonhandicapped children must be socially integrated. Physical integration can be achieved easily by merely assigning the two groups of children to the same room. But if there is social isolation and rejection of the minority group, then appropriate mainstreaming has not been achieved. In successful mainstreaming, handicapped and nonhandicapped peers associate and interact in ways that suggest there is social acceptance of both groups. Third, the handicapped and nonhandicapped children must be instructionally integrated, at least for a meaningful proportion of time. This means staff must arrange activities in ways that simultaneously address individual needs and yet promote integration. Daily schedules and instructional procedures must be organized around the needs of children rather than around the convenience and preconceived notions of staff members.

An Ongoing Educational and Programming Process Must Take Place

True mainstreaming is much more than the mere opening of

doors of educational programs previously closed to the handicapped. Effective mainstreaming requires an ongoing planning and programming process that meets the special needs of each child. This planning and programming process involves several kinds of activities:

- the continuous assessment of each child's developmental level and learning needs;
- the targeting of goals and objectives for each child that guide the planning of curriculum and instructional procedures;
- the development of a specific plan for services and daily learning activities (and Individual Education Plan -- IEP);
- the commitment of staff time and program resources to achieve the specified goals and objectives for each child;
- the delivery and orchestration of staff and child activities in a way that allows for a manageable daily schedule.

Staff Roles, Responsibilities, Procedures for Coordination and Methods of Communication Must Be Clear

Effective mainstreaming often entails multiple activities that must take place simultaneously and which require carefully synchronized staff assignments. This means educational tasks must be specified and responsibilities assigned among regular and special staff who will work with the children. Administrators, teachers, aides, and clinical staff are included. In a sense, effective mainstreaming requires superior teamwork if both handicapped and nonhandicapped children are to be properly served. And coordination is at the heart of good teamwork.

This comprehensive definition of mainstreaming has many implications for the job roles which staff members must be prepared to assume. If mainstreaming merely involved the admission of handicapped children into settings including nonhandicapped children, personnel preparation would primarily involve the development of positive, accepting attitudes toward the new approach and the incoming children. But because mainstreaming involves instructional, program, and administrative change, attitudinal change (though very important) is a mere beginning. To fulfill their new roles skillfully, staff members need a new array of skills so they can implement the many tasks required by this definition.

EARLY CHILDHOOD vs. SCHOOL-AGE MAINSTREAMING

The fields of regular early childhood education and early education for the handicapped are characterized by a diversity which complicates the task of personnel training. These unique complications become clear when early childhood mainstreaming is compared to school-aged mainstreaming.

Developing programs that train elementary school personnel to implement mainstreaming programs is a relatively straightforward task because:

- Mainstreaming of handicapped school-age students follows a rather standard, predictable model; that is, handicapped youngsters are placed in regular classes with regular education teachers, or special classes join the regular classes for some activities.

- Regular school-age classroom teachers represent a relatively homogeneous group; all have a basic level of training and have worked through the same type of preservice degree program in education.

- Since the regular school-age classroom setting is relatively standard, the type of setting or program in which a teacher must be trained to function successfully is clear from the beginning.

- The broad types of resources available to regular teachers involved in mainstreaming are generally predictable (since elementary schools operate under a rather standard administrative and organizational model), so it is clear which skills are of greater or lesser importance in view of the types of support services that will be available to supplement the mainstreaming activities.

- The broad educational goals that govern the regular school-age classroom are rather clear and similar across classes and across schools.

Mainstreaming preschoolers, however, does not occur in one standard type of early childhood setting or within one common administrative system. There is tremendous variation across potential mainstreaming sites; they differ on many dimensions:

* The type of services offered to children and the purposes for which services are rendered;
  Some programs are designed primarily to provide day care; others emphasize socialization and call themselves "play schools"; others emphasize educational purposes, with considerable variation, too, in the types of educational goals they feature.

* The type and number of staff members available to work with children;
  Some programs have small staffs and operate primarily through volunteer help; others have large staffs and resources.

* The training background of staff members;
  Staff members in some centers have no training at all; some programs have employees with college training but not necessarily in fields relating to early childhood education; other programs employ staff with early childhood certification and possibly bachelors or masters degrees in human development, early childhood education, etc.

* The type of curriculum offered and the kinds of outcomes expected in children as a result of their enrollment in the program;
  Some programs emphasize social development and play skills; some emphasize kindergarten preparation; some emphasize general enrichment; others offer no formal curriculum but emphasize instead quality day care and supervision of children's free-play activities.

* The nature of the administrative system under which the program operates, including the size and presence of other types of services under the same administrative umbrella;

* The type of agency under which the program operates and the regulations and standards to which the agency and its staff must adhere, including staff qualifications, quality of services to children etc.;
  Early childhood programs are operated by a great variety of agencies, including women's groups; local, state, and federal agencies; churches; private profit and nonprofit groups; industrial enterprises; and university training and research centers.

* The amount and types of resources available to staff members; Special materials and equipment, specialized therapists, extra aides, special consultants, etc., are abundant in some programs; other programs have few of these resources.

This extreme diversity among potential mainstreaming sites confounds any clearcut generalization about training needs by those involved in mainstreaming preschoolers. It is obvious that needs will differ from program to program. Teacher trainers, then, do not have the luxury of assuming a "typical" early childhood setting and planning personnel training accordingly.

The development of meaningful training programs for early childhood mainstreaming is further complicated by several other factors. First, personnel who need training are not as homogeneous a group as are regular elementary school teachers. They have not all passed through a common university level pre-service training program and not all are certified or college-educated. Second, there is no single agency responsible for providing in-service training to staff already working in regular early childhood mainstreaming programs. Each agency does as it sees fit and arranges its own training for its own staff. This fact alone fragments efforts and makes it difficult for a uniform or coordinated system of training to be developed and delivered across many centers. In many states, the absence of regulations requiring minimal levels of training for early childhood personnel leaves the issue of training to each center and its own leadership.

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING PRESCHOOLERS

Two different models are used to mainstream preschoolers. The first model involves regular early childhood programs created primarily to serve normally developing youngsters. Mainstreaming in these centers involves the integration of a small group of handicapped children into the program (usually 10 to 25 percent of the total classroom enrollment). The second model, usually referred to as "reverse mainstreaming," involves special early intervention programs that are being created to serve handicapped children from birth to age 5 or 6 years. Mainstreaming in these programs entails the enrollment of a few normally developing children who serve as models. In this case, the normally developing children are in the minority (usually 20 to 50 percent of the classroom enrollment). Effective mainstreaming here involves the

integration of the normally developing children and the management of their social, instructional, and enrichment needs within a classroom containing a majority of mildly to severely handicapped children.

Obviously, the presence of two such different approaches to mainstreaming adds another dimension to the task of preparing staff -- planning for distinct target groups. Three groups must be considered: 1) early childhood personnel in regular classrooms who are or will be receiving handicapped youngsters into their rooms; 2) special education personnel who are integrating normally developing children into their classrooms; and 3) special services staff members such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, or social service personnel, who may work in one or both types of settings.

PERSONNEL TRAINING NEEDS

Recognizing that there is tremendous variation among programs and personnel involved in mainstreaming, what are the training needs? Administrators, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other specialists who work daily with combined groups of handicapped and nonhandicapped children can offer the best insights.

Training Needs from the Perspective of Teaching Staff

This author asked a number of teachers involved in mainstreaming programs: "When your center began integrating handicapped and nonhandicapped children, what difficult task could have been made easier if you had received proper training?" Responses indicated several clear themes.

* The need for training to build positive attitudes toward the mainstreaming concept and toward the inclusion of the minority group's members in a program from which they had previously been excluded.

> "When we started mainstreaming handicapped kids in our center, I didn't think it would work. I still think that now. They just don't fit in. They can't play together very well; they can't keep up with the other kids. I think the normal kids are going to suffer. I'm against

that. You guessed it -- I think we're wasting our time and I'm wasting mine trying to work with those handicapped children. They're just not ready to be in preschool."

"I'm all for mainstreaming, but it's not training I need. The handicapped ones aren't my responsibility. I'm not a special education teacher, and I shouldn't be expected to be one. What I need is somebody to come in my room at 9:15 during tablework time and at 10:30 and again at 11:00 to work with the handicapped children. They're not ready to do what the other kids are doing, so they just interfere. It would be best if somebody would take them out of the room and do something else with them. I don't think training me to teach the handicapped is the issue."

* The need to understand the purposes and objectives of early childhood education for normally developing children and for young children with handicaps or conditions that place them at risk for developmental disabilities. This includes a recognition of how the needs of these two groups are different and alike and how these translate into program and instructional planning for each handicapped or nonhandicapped child.

"The hardest thing for me was to figure out what I should be doing to keep challenging the normal kids, and what I could do to honestly help the handicapped ones. I feel I have a better sense of what regular kids ought to get out of preschool. But how do you know what to give the handicapped children who obviously don't get involved so fast? When it's obvious they're not going to learn without your help, how do you know what to do? I know they need something more. I can't tell you what I need training in -- but I know I need help."

* The need for confidence in one's ability to teach both handicapped and nonhandicapped children, individually and collectively, in an integrated setting.

"I was really scared of mainstreaming -- maybe overwhelmed is a better word -- when I found I was supposed to know what to do with a cerebral-palsied person like Chris. Then with several other handicapped children in the room, I didn't know where to begin. I believe handi-

capped kids shouldn't be told they can't come into our center, and I wanted to do a good job. But so often I was lost as to what to do with them. Sometimes Chris and one of the others just ended up sitting alone in a corner somewhere doing nothing as long as I left them there on their own. Chris would just lie helplessly on the floor and stare at the ceiling. Anybody knows that's bad. I felt like a real failure, and I used to think I was a good teacher. I've asked my director not to put any more handicapped kids in my room. I sure needed some training, but I don't know if I could learn enough fast enough."

"That first year in a reverse mainstreamed class was a real challenge. I felt confident that I knew how to deal with the handicapped preschoolers. But I wasn't sure how I could handle such bright, energetic, aggressive normal children at the same time. Especially, I was worried about the normal children's getting a good education out of it all too, and I had some doubt about how they could do that in a class containing some pretty handicapped kids. I felt insecure about that for a long time until I discovered that all I needed to do for them was the same individualized planning I did with the handicapped. Too bad it took me so long to learn that through my own trial and error. I needed a lot of support and encouragement that year. Some in-service training could have taken care of that, I think."

* The need to understand the changes in teaching processes involved in mainstreaming. This includes added or altered teaching responsibilities and instructional tasks, new curriculum requirements, and new procedures to individualize curriculum to meet the needs of the handicapped children.

"I didn't know what mainstreaming meant to my job as a teacher until Danny and Harold walked into my room. Nobody told me how much extra work it would take. Nobody told me about those individual education plans. I'd never seen one before. And I found out I was supposed to write one immediately! Most of my time was spent just trying to control those two kids -- they just weren't independent like the others. It seemed like suddenly all our time had to be spent away from what we should be doing to teach the class. I felt like a whole lot of things got dumped on me. Did we need help! I

don't think we were prepared at all to chew what we'd bitten off!"

"How to individualize curriculum and plan activities for each child and make it work with small groups of children -- that's what I had to learn. I thought I understood what it meant to individualize. But I found I've learned so much more since we started mainstreaming. It was a real eye-opener. That's where I think training is really important. I would have liked someone there to help me avoid so many mistakes and frustrations. You need to teach people how to individualize preschool activities for a classroom full of handicapped and normal children."

* The need for specific skills for working with children with particular types of handicaps. This includes skills to assess or identify children's learning needs, identify and write objectives or plans to meet the needs of a special child, and develop procedures that will help a handicapped child learn in as small increments as necessary.

"The biggest challenge I had was learning how to handle the two children who had cerebral palsy. Knowing how to help them eat and drink at snack time, help them walk, or hold a crayon when their muscles are spastic isn't something you know automatically. That's where I think training is a must. Mainstreaming teachers can't do justice to a crippled child or a blind child or even one with a hearing problem unless they know what to do. You can't assume we know that. And it's not fair to put those children in our classes, dump all that responsibility on us, and then leave us hanging without help. We don't have the know-how to handle those children."

"We had a lot of in-service training when we started, and it was irreplaceable. A consultant taught me how to work on speech and language with the little boy in my room who had a hearing problem. She showed me how to communicate with him as just a part of our daily routines so he'd know what was going on. We also mainstreamed a little blind girl in our center because there wasn't any place else for her to go. A specialist from the public schools came three times a week and helped me plan April's activities and showed me how to work with her. I loved it and really learned a lot. The special-

ist brought me a bunch of materials I could use with my handicapped children. I've never made up such individual programs for two children in my life. But it sure worked, thanks to the help I got."

* The need for skills to work as a team member with other practitioners and with consultants and to recognize and use other resources that will help provide the special services and assistance needed by handicapped children.

"What bothered me most when we started mainstreaming was all the people who started coming into my room. Suddenly there were all these other people there making plans for my children. I'm not used to that, and I didn't like it. I was terribly self-conscious when they kept coming in my room. I didn't feel good about having other people watch me teach. It made me feel like I was losing control over my class when they started telling me what my kids needed. Worst of all, they kept asking me to do things I didn't know how to do. I like to run my own show. My supervisor told me I need to learn to be a part of a team. I can't argue, but it's been hard. So I guess that's an area where you should train people like me who've hever had to work in a team before."

* The need to understand that successful mainstreaming requires change in the daily classroom routines and to have some preliminary concept of the kinds of adaptations or changes that may be necessary. This includes possible changes in teaching roles, in the types of learning activities planned to meet children's needs, and in the way children are grouped. Staff members need to be informed sufficiently about mainstreaming processes so they recognize that the program that existed before mainstreaming does not give the flexibility that may be needed to successfully integrate handicapped and nonhandicapped children.

"When we started mainstreaming, I had to do some things differently with the kids. After teaching regular preschool for ten years, I had everything planned and organized down to a science. But with the handicapped, my pet plan didn't go so well; the children didn't work in very easily. At first I thought I was losing my touch. It was frustrating, and I got awfully critical of this mainstreaming. Nobody prepared me for what it would really mean. I assumed we could just go on as always;

we would just have a few different kids, and we'd need an adult to be close to the handicapped children to help them do what we always do. It didn't work out that way. So if you want to train people, show them beforehand what mainstreaming means in how activities are set up. Tell them how it affects how you teach the kids, and how you can't necessarily teach them all in one big group. Don't just sell us on the idea of mainstreaming and then think we know how to make it happen so we all can live with it and like it."

Training Needs from the Perspective of Administrators

Administrators are particularly alert to the skills personnel need to make the instructional processes and staff coordination and management processes work smoothly. Here is a sampling of training needs from the administrator's point of view; some re-emphasize the needs described by teaching staff.

* Training in how to work together to plan for children and how to coordinate staff activities in ways that allow more effective use of time to meet the individual needs of children.

* Training in how to communicate plans and procedures to colleagues in ways that are understandable and specific enough to be implemented by others (e.g., a teacher must be able to plan and then communicate specific procedures and instructions to an aide).

* Assistance in understanding and respecting the roles of other staff members who may become involved in working with the children (particularly with the handicapped) as a result of mainstreaming.

* Assistance in understanding curriculum and teaching methods for both handicapped and nonhandicapped children so that staff members are not wholly dependent upon others to tell them what to do.

* Providing personnel with sufficient skill and confidence to tackle their new roles so they can proceed with an attitude of "I can do it," or "I know when I need help, and I know how and where to go about getting it."

* Exposure to other mainstreaming programs so staff members have a realistic and informed perspective of what effective mainstreaming is and what kinds of expectations are both feasible and practical. This includes knowing when a child should be referred to another program.

* Preparation for specific job roles in a program (teaching children, working with other staff, and working with parents) so that the staff members follow necessary rules/regulations and do not create excessive problems or burdens on colleagues or administrative/supervisory personnel.

Training Needs from the Perspective of Parents

The services parents expect staff members to deliver are important because services for children from birth to age 5 years operate in a competitive market. Students are required by law to attend elementary school, and parents have little say about the types of other enrollees in their child's public classes. But parents of younger children are indeed in a position to shop around for early childhood programs and make their own program choices. If they believe a teacher to be inadequate, or if they disagree with the teaching philosophy of one program, they can look for another program. Parents can reject a mainstreaming program if they disagree with the concept or if they believe that staff members are unable, given the mixed clientele, to meet the needs of their own child. Thus, if staff members in mainstreaming programs are unable to inspire confidence in parents, these programs might well lose their clientele. Since most early childhood centers exist wholly or in part on tuition payments, this consideration is serious.

Mainstreaming programs and their staffs thus face a special challenge. They must be able to articulate the mainstreaming concept and demonstrate its benefits to parents of both handicapped and nonhandicapped children. In short, mainstreaming programs must meet the expectations of two sets of consumers -- parents of handicapped children and parents of normally developing children. On some dimensions those expectations are similar, but on other levels the expectations and service needs are different.

What is it that parents of handicapped and nonhandicapped children want from early childhood programs and from their staffs? Values undoubtedly vary, but a sampling is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS OF MAINSTREAMING PROGRAMS AND THEIR STAFFS

Expectations of Mainstreaming Programs by Parents of Nonhandicapped Children	Expectations of Mainstreaming Programs by Parents of Handicapped Children
Program offers enrichment, good social stimulation, and opportunity for children to explore and discover new things in the environment.	Program addresses special needs of each child's handicap and provides special help or training in areas where development is not progressing as it should.
Staff members have solid understanding of child development and reflect a genuine caring for and understanding of young children.	Staff members understand, accept, and know how to handle handicapped children.
Staff members know how to deal well with both handicapped and nonhandicapped children and are well organized so not all staff time is spent with the handicapped ones to the neglect of the normally developing children.	Staff members assure handicapped children are included meaningfully in activities -- not isolated, teased, or treated as "different."
Staff members know how to encourage creativity, initiative, good social and play skills, and independence in children.	Staff members structure activities so that not all staff time is spent with the nonhandicapped children to the neglect of handicapped children.
Staff members communicate warmth, trust, caring and reliability to children.	Staff members understand parental concerns and are able to provide parents with resources they can use to work with their children at home
Staff members carry out a variety of activities with the children so that children have fun and enjoy their time at the center.	Staff members keep handicapped children occupied meaningfully, making specific efforts to teach the children rather than expecting them to fit in or allowing them to sit idly.
Program has a variety of educational materials that are stimulating to children, and staff members encourage children to play with different items.	Staff members are willing and able to be advocates for children.
Staff members encourage children and offer stimulating activities that challenge the children and promote learning.	Staff members can assure children's physical safety.
Staff members know how to assure the physical safety of the children and are alert to their nutritional needs.	Staff members set realistic goals for handicapped children and do not place inappropriate pressure on children or parents.
	Staff members are willing and able to explain children's activities and progress to parents.
	Staff members develop or adapt materials for handicapped children.

Preferences summarized from Table 1 highlight several general points:

* Parents of handicapped children seem alert to their children's limitations in doing many things nonhandicapped children do spontaneously or learn very quickly. They are concerned that staff members understand these limitations and know how to deal with them. They are concerned that staff members know how to and will take deliberate steps to teach and help their children learn needed skills. Parents seem concerned that staff members will make the extra effort to see that the handicapped children are engaged in constructive activities.

* Parents of normally developing children seem alert to their children's abilities to do many things on their own and the need for enrichment. They want their children to have opportunities to explore, to interact freely with other children and things in the environment, and to receive encouragement for new learning experiences. They are concerned that staff members nuture, help, and challenge their children.

* Both groups of parents are concerned that staff members understand child development and are sensitive to the needs of their children. They want staff members to accept and love their children and to be competent in ways that assure the safety and overall well-being of their children.

* Parents of handicapped children have additional, special kinds of needs and seem to hold some hopes that the early childhood center and its staff will support and help them deal with their children's special needs at home. Many parents turn to the staff for support and encouragement, and often for information to help them deal with the impact of their children's handicaps upon their homes and families.

SUMMARY

Personnel training is required for successful mainstreaming. And the nature of that training also is important. Training must be provided to people who work or will work in many different, in-

dependently operated, and philosophically and programmatically diverse mainstreaming settings. The training must be appropriate to personnel who may differ immensely in their educational backgrounds and initial levels of competency.

Specific issues relating to these requisites for mainstreaming can be itemized under four broad areas of concern:

The Issue of Training Goals and Purposes

What should the primary emphasis or purpose of training for mainstreaming be if regular early childhood personnel are to be prepared adequately for their new roles? Given limited time and restrictions on the amount of training that can be provided, upon what training goals should highest priority be placed? (For example, should emphasis be placed foremost upon the development of positive attitudes and an understanding of handicapping conditions? Or is knowledge of resources, practical teaching/caretaking methods, or other information of greater importance?)

The Issue of Content

What specific competencies and information should staff members acquire to aid them in mainstreaming handicapped youngsters? What should be provided to individuals in pre-service training programs and to individuals already working in regular early childhood programs where handicapped preschoolers or infants will be integrated? In spite of the extreme variation that exists in the type of early childhood service programs as well as in the personnel who work for them, is there a common curriculum that should be offered to all? How does the fact that staff members will work with children who may differ in the types and severity of their disabilities affect the kinds of training required? Are training needs so unique to the person, the program, and to the community that broad-scale training approaches are inadequate?

The Issue of Responsibility

Who should assume responsibility for organizing and delivering training? Who should determine needs, define training content, or determine the readiness of personnel to assume responsibility for mainstreaming? Given the multiplicity of agencies, professional disciplines, and funding agencies who have some in-

vestment in services to handicapped and nonhandicapped children under school age, who should assume leadership responsibilities for training? Current trends point to the importance of interdisciplinary and interagency cooperation and the necessity of avoiding unnecessary duplication and competition.

The Issue of Delivery Method

How can training be delivered most efficiently to such a varied clientele at both pre-service and in-service levels? What strategies can be used to train individuals or to prepare program staff members at sites that are inherently different in their objectives, services, and modes of operation? When training needs in the field are so diverse, how can training be delivered in ways that provide consistent support and continuity across sites and over time? What strategies for personnel training will ensure that personnel receive quality training that helps them and enhances the successful mainstreaming of young children? Given that staff members need skills and knowledge as well as positive attitudes and understanding, how can training be designed to achieve all these important outcomes?

The issue of training is complex. There are many questions but not a lot of answers. Even the best teachers or child care workers may view mainstreaming as an awesome task. Some see mainstreaming as an unwelcome burden and view themselves as recipients of a responsibility that should lie elsewhere. In fact, poor attitudes about mainstreaming are often cited as major deterrents to its successful implementation. Even for those who receive mainstreaming enthusiastically, early training in the skills needed to manage integrated groups and to make good use of consultants or specialized personnel will help assure success. Indeed, positive attitudes toward mainstreaming are nurtured by positive experiences when staff members are skilled enough to meet the demands of new roles.

In summary, personnel training is perhaps the most important component of successful mainstreaming. To enroll handicapped children in regular settings or normally developing children in special settings without adequate staff preparation is to invite failure for both staff and children. Individuals asked to assume responsibility for youngsters with whom they have limited or no experience and little formal preparation are themselves handicapped.

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Chapter 3

Child Characteristics and Outcomes Related to Mainstreaming

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Chapter 3

Child Characteristics and Outcomes Related to Mainstreaming

INTRODUCTION

A noted professor of English once argued convincingly that a good essay and a happy life are both predicated on a healthy dose of apology. Following that wisdom, we will begin with a few apologies and comments to the reader.

Chronicling the knowledge and insights of others is an honorable but precarious endeavor. Our deliberation of the issues surrounding child characteristics and outcomes related to mainstreaming produced many excellent questions and a few credible answers. Where the reader finds some useful information, credit should go to our colleagues; we will take full responsibility for the shortcomings.

Given that we are acting as historians, as it were, we will share the biases that influenced the foregoing statements. First, we accept as a "matter of policy," not as a "statement of fact," that all handicapped children should be afforded the opportunity to be educated with normally developing children.[1] We cannot cite evidence to prove that developmentally integrated service models

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[1]The important distinction between matters of policy and those of fact is credited to Donald M. Baer.

are more or less effective than segregated models. We would argue, however, that accepting as public policy the opportunity for all handicapped children to be educated with normally developing children is the only avenue to answering the question of relative efficacy.

Our second bias is that all handicapped children are eligible for developmentally integrated services. We fully realize that mainstreaming a youngster with digit and letter reversals is probably a more advanced science than providing the same kind of integrated services for a self-destructive, operant-vomiting child. Yet, when we evaluate a youngster's eligibility for mainstreaming, we must do so in a conditional sense only. Mainstreaming options ultimately are restricted by the limits of our science and the imperfection of our interventions -- not by the behavioral handicaps of our students. When we can agree that the perfect treatments have been developed, and when we can argue that they are delivered by the most highly trained personnel in the most ecologically valid settings, then we can begin to speak intelligently about the limiting conditions of developmentally integrated services.

Our final bias toward mainstreaming concerns an approach to evaluation. In our collaborative venture with the regular education establishment, we as special educators should insist that the proper, most humane way to assess integrated education is to ask how Johnny, Susie, or Tim were affected. Only with such a "single-case" evaluative approach can we hope to fine-tune any educational service system to maximize outcomes for as many children as possible.

THE DECISION TO MAINSTREAM

Consider two basic questions related to the decision to mainstream: 1) Which handicapped child characteristics and behavior patterns predict successful mainstreaming? and 2) Which handicapped child characteristics and behavior patterns predict serious instructional difficulties associated with mainstreaming?

Which Handicapped Child Characteristics and Behavior Patterns Predict Successful Mainstreaming?

The empirical basis for selecting behavior patterns predictive of successful mainstreaming is quite limited. There have

been no systematic attempts to equip handicapped children with different kinds and levels of skills and to then monitor their success in mainstream settings. Assuming that a generic set of competencies would emerge from such an analysis, we are far from integrating such competencies into a scope and sequence of instruction.

The available information on child behaviors predictive of successful mainstreaming comes from two primary sources. First, regular education teachers, from a number of studies, have enumerated those child skills which they feel are most conducive to successful mainstreaming. Second, a number of experimenters have selected particular skills on an a priori basis, taught those skills to handicapped children, and then attempted to integrate trained children into mainstream settings. Where children have been successful, the earlier trained skills are presumed to have been largely responsible for the successful mainstream placement.

The skills currently thought to yield successful mainstreaming outcomes fall into three broad categories: 1) social skills; 2) classroom deportment; and 3) minimal competence in the available curricula.

Social Skills

Considerable attention has been paid to handicapped children's social relations with their age-peers at the preschool level. (Some professionals feel this concern with social relations has inhibited the study of cognitive skills that are necessary for successful mainstreaming.) In a variety of small-scale, experimental projects, the following social skills have been shown to facilitate social integration in mainstream settings:

* sharing materials or play objects;
* initiating interactions with peers;
* responding quickly to the social initiations of others;
* showing affection (by hugs, holding hands) toward peers;
* assisting peers with some activity (e.g., helping them onto or off a slide).

Probably more important than specific social skills is the reciprocity of interaction between children -- an equitable ex-

change of social behaviors. For children (handicapped or not) to be socially accepted, it has been shown repeatedly that they must participate as equals during social interactions; they must be initiators of interactions and recipients of social initiations.

Classroom Deportment

In terms of classroom deportment, the following skills have been identified as important to successful mainstreaming:

* child must be able to ask questions to clarify rules or assignments;
* child must engage in some "teacher-pleasing" behaviors (e.g., smiling at teacher, thanking teacher for help);
* child must be able to maintain appropriate levels of academic and social behavior with minimal teacher feedback;
* child must comply quickly with teacher commands;
* child must perform the above behaviors within a range identified for the particular classroom.

These classroom deportment skills certainly do not represent an exhaustive catalogue of critical survival behaviors.

While the number of studies is small, some evidence suggests that regular education teachers are more concerned with mainstreamed children's deportment skills than with their social interaction competencies. We would be remiss if we did not mention the rather heated debate in the professional literature regarding the model of education that follows from a heavy emphasis on good deportment. On the one hand, it has been argued that compliant, rule-following students are often passive learners who spend a large portion of each school day being instructed in routine-promoting activities. Alternatively, it is argued that order in the classroom is a vital prerequisite to academic instruction. The point that should be emphasized regarding mainstream curriculum targets is that no definitive evidence is yet available to validate the importance of classroom deportment behaviors at the preschool level.

Minimal Competence in Available Curricula

Some minimal level of competence in the available mainstream curricula may be a vital ingredient for successful placement.

Competent performance (no matter how rudimentary) by handicapped children may avert potential peer rejection, teacher bias and differential treatment, and feelings of inadequacy on the part of the handicapped child.

Which Handicapped Child Characteristics and Behavior Patterns Predict Serious Instructional Difficulties Associated with Mainstreaming?

Not surprisingly, most of the following maladaptive child behaviors and characteristics are the inverse of the skills previously mentioned as necessary for success. For example, in the social skill domain, the following behaviors may signal serious instructional barriers:

* negative, abusive social contacts with peers;
* failure to initiate positive social contact with peers;
* failure to respond quickly and positively to the approaches of peers;
* absence of skills necessary to withdraw gracefully from interactions with peers.

In the area of classroom deportment, the following behaviors may present extensive instructional difficulties:

* attention levels that demand close supervision and intensive monitoring by teachers;
* persistent rule-breaking and noncompliant acts;
* failure to generalize the use of skills learned in one setting or context to another.

The Question of Readiness

Considering collectively the foregoing positive and negative behavioral predictors of mainstreaming outcomes, three important issues must be addressed. First, there is a clear "readiness model" implied in the above listings, suggesting that handicapped children will be taught to do or not to do certain things in segregated settings, and that once these ends are accomplished, the

children will be ready for the mainstream. Our suspicion is that a large fraction of the handicapped population will never be judged "ready" if the identified behaviors become prerequisites for mainstreaming. We will develop this point by discussing social skills.

As pointed out earlier, it is the reciprocity of social interactions, their exchange on an equitable basis, that is taken as a key indicator of social skill level. But this paradigm makes assessment of any child's skill dependent upon the behavior of social partners, and will invariably result in underestimations of handicapped children's performances in developmentally segregated settings.

Some of the most convincing evidence of the likely underestimation of handicapped children's skill levels can be found in treatment evaluation research. For example, in studies involving autistic children from special education classrooms, it has been shown that initial levels of performance do not predict children's responsiveness to intervention. In fact, there have been several children in these studies who engaged in no social behaviors prior to intervention. On the first day of intervention, which offered a more stimulating and responsive social environment than previously experienced by the children, profound social behavior changes were evident with these "zero-level" children (Strain et al., 1979).

The basic message from both naturalistic and intervention research is quite clear. If maximum skill performance is to be portrayed, children must have the opportunities to perform. It seems doubtful that such opportunities, requiring the presence of socially responsive partners, can be made available in developmentally segregated classes.

Similarly, in an integrated classroom, judgments of handicapped children's social skill levels are again dependent upon the behavior of others. Although the social isolation and rejection experienced by some handicapped children are partially based on their lack of skill, the rejector must also be considered. In a recent treatment evaluation study, three mentally retarded boys were mainstreamed with 24 nonhandicapped children. Prior to intervention the three handicapped boys were judged on a sociometric device to be the three lowest ranked children in the class in terms of social skills. Also, negative interactions between handicapped and nonhandicapped children occurred at three to four times the frequency of positive contacts prior to intervention.

The intervention, which involved no skill training for the handicapped children, was designed to alter nonhandicapped children's evaluation of their handicapped classmates. Specifically, the boys were assigned as team captains in a group competition game with their game efforts arranged to result in reinforcement for the team members. Captains also handed out trinkets and edibles awarded to team members. The intervention not only improved the boys' sociometric ratings, but their interactions with nonhandicapped peers improved dramatically. These behavioral and sociometric changes were found to be maintained over a four-week period following the intervention. This study, along with other naturalistic and intervention research, points to the necessity for and the efficacy of altering peer behavior in mainstream settings to facilitate interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped children (Strain, 1981).

Skills Assessment

Accurate assessment of identified skills is a second predictor of successful mainstreaming. If positive and maladaptive child characteristics and behaviors are to be part of the decision to mainstream, unambiguous measurement must be available. In the areas of classroom deportment and academic competence, the available assessment methods are quite satisfactory. For example, there are dozens of direct observational protocols, complete with behavior category definitions and observational procedures for reliably assessing such classroom deportment skills as on-task and off-task activity, compliance with requests, adherence to rules, and teacher-pleasing responses. Likewise, many norm-referenced, diagnostic, criterion-referenced, and "unit tests" are available to assess children's levels of academic competence.

In the arena of social competence, however, considerable disagreement surrounds the type and quality of available assessment procedures. The three most often used methods of assessment are teacher nominations or rankings of children's skills; sociometric or peer rankings; and direct observations of children's skills. The methods probably are best understood and used when applied for different clinical purposes. For example, teacher nominations or rank-ordering of children along a behavioral dimension (e.g., "plays with peers") are highly cost-effective in screening candidates for skill training. The information generated is not specific enough to be directly relevant to educational intervention. Peer friendship nominations or rankings of acceptance or rejection provide a cost-effective alternative to direct observation. In situations where peer behavior and attitudes may directly affect a

child's observed level of social skills (e.g., mainstream classes), sociometric procedures can help pinpoint specific child-child interaction patterns that should be targets of intervention. Observational methods, on the other hand, are most effective when used to select specific skills for training. Moreover, initial observations can be used as a baseline or beginning level against which to assess (through repeated observation) the impact of training.

The Child-Program Match

The final issue to be raised in regard to child characteristics and behavior patterns concerns the obvious interaction between mainstream program variables and individual child competencies. Since there are probably as many mainstreaming models as there are mainstreaming programs, it would be foolhardy to suggest that a generalizable list of critical child behaviors exists. Mainstream programs with a low child-teacher ratio, access to consultants, and individualized instruction may successfully integrate youngsters with severe behavioral limitations. Programs that are not so endowed may only be able to accommodate children with slight developmental handicaps. Clearly, it is necessary to consider the individual strengths and weaknesses of potential clients and those of the programs, and generalized decisions about who should be mainstreamed, and where, are not possible.

INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS IN MAINSTREAM SETTINGS

Discussion of instructional decisions in mainstream settings focus on these questions: 1) Are there particular handicapped child characteristics and behavior patterns that dictate a particular instructional format (e.g., one-to-one, small-group, peer-tutoring)? and 2) Are there mainstream curriculum targets that are particularly suited to handicapped children with certain characteristics and behavior patterns?

Are There Particular Handicapped Child Characteristics and Behavior Patterns that Dictate a Particular Instructional Format?

Perhaps the most pervasive attitude that has restricted educators from exploring alternative instructional strategies for diverse groups of children is the assumption that homogeneous group-

ing is a desirable objective. Appropriately described by Lou Brown (Brown et al., 1976) as the "logic of homogeneity," this attitude has precluded the development of feasible instructional strategies for educating children with a variety of different instructional needs within the same classroom. The end result has been restricted opportunities for both handicapped and nonhandicapped students to develop certain social skills and attitudes that are important to function in a heterogeneous adult environment.

The existing instructional strategies for educating groups of children with a wide range of abilities and needs is quite limited. As a result, many regular and special educators often surmise without empirical evidence that a particular instructional format is the only viable means to teach children who have specific learning or behavioral characteristics. For example, one-to-one training is generally regarded as the most effective method for achieving optimal changes in behavior among severely handicapped learners. Recently, however, a need to consider group formats with severely handicapped children has been noted, and investigations of group instruction with these children have begun to appear in the literature. This research has shown that with systematic training, the development of academic and social behaviors by severely handicapped children can be effected in small groups as well as in individual teaching situations.

Child characteristics and behavior patterns do not necessarily dictate a particular instructional format. However, it has been demonstrated that particular instructional procedures may be more or less effective with particular curricular targets. Specific aspects of instructional procedures that have been shown to positively influence child behavior include:

* the degree and frequency of teacher attention
  e.g., increasing independent work skills by gradually fading teacher attention

* the nature and frequency of teacher instructions
  e.g., giving clear, concise instructions only once, rather than repeating instructions and inadvertently teaching the child that he or she does not have to comply when initially instructed

* the type of correction procedure
  e.g., physically prompting a correct response from a child who has not developed general imitation skills

* the type and frequency of reinforcement
  e.g., reinforcing a child for every correct response to develop initial skill acquisition

* the degree of individualization
  e.g., identifying those objectives that are appropriate for each child's skill level within a group instructional format

* the nature and scope of instructional materials
  e.g., selecting manipulative materials rather than pictures to develop beginning skills in object recognition.

The match-up of specific instructional procedures with particular child characteristics and behavior patterns in the social, deportment, and academic competency skill domains has also been reported in the research literature. In the area of social skills training, for example, the use of specific types of adult prompts to play and the selection of various materials with which to play have been shown to foster social interaction among normally developing and handicapped preschoolers.

In the area of classroom deportment skills, a number of instructional techniques have been developed during the last decade for increasing the feasibility of integrating even severely handicapped children into the educational mainstream. In one reported study, an autistic five-year-old was successfully mainstreamed into a regular kindergarten when her social behavior, self-stimulation, and compliance with teacher commands were targeted for intervention. This was accomplished by the application of a systematic training procedure designed to gradually reduce the frequency of teacher attention and reinforcement required to maintain an acceptable level of behavior. Similar procedures have also been developed for teaching severely handicapped children to respond to instructions in a group situation and to work independently within a group without constant supervision.

In the area of academic competency, research in discrimination learning with moderate and severely handicapped children has identified certain types of prompts that are more effective than others for skill acquisition. For example, one researcher found that although children never learned a discrimination task when commonly used teaching prompts, such as pointing and looking at the correct stimulus, were employed, children mastered the discrimination when instructional materials were changed to emphasize the salient features of the stimulus (e.g., darkening the vertical lines in the letters "d" and "p").

While particular child characteristics and behavior patterns may dictate certain instructional procedures, these procedures may be effectively implemented in a variety of different instructional formats. The instructional environment of mainstream classes should be sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs of all students singly, in small groups, and en masse.

It may be that a hierarchical instructional format is appropriate, with children moving from closely monitored instruction to less directly controlled learning. Researchers working with severely handicapped learners report that interventions based upon gradually thinning the schedule of reinforcement and gradually increasing the number of children in the group have produced large increases in both verbal and nonverbal appropriate behaviors in the classroom (on both previously learned skills and on new behaviors learned in the classroom).

Many integrated model demonstration programs have reported the use of a variety of different instructional formats that reflect some kind of instructional hierarchy. For example, staggered placement of handicapped children has been used in model demonstration programs. This procedure allows for needed intensive individualization prior to placement in less supervised instructional settings. Initial training in minimal competencies often is given in a variety of different settings with a one-to-one adult/child ratio. During group instruction, one adult may be assigned to directly intervene as necessary on the handicapped child's behavior patterns. As the child meets certain criterion levels of performance, the teacher/child ratio is gradually adjusted. This hierarchy is employed to ensure that the child achieves a minimal level of competency in particular skill domains that have been identified to be necessary for successful performance in multiple-child instructional formats.

Reliably Assessing Learning Characteristics

Whatever instructional formats are used, the assessment of child characteristics and behavior patterns must be reliable and efficient. Behavioral observational methods currently appear to be the most reliable way to assess handicapped children's particular learning characteristics. Generally these assessment procedures include some variations of the following:

* an observation of the child's performance on a specific skill training task;

* the identification of possible learning characteristics that require assessment;

* the design of an instructional format that will assess whether or not the child demonstrates a particular learning characteristic.

For example, the available evidence on the perceptual abilities of severely handicapped youngsters suggests that some children may have difficulty responding correctly to either auditory or visual information. Taking this observed learning characteristic one step further, it has been suggested that some children may be "auditory" learners and other children may be "visual" learners. To discriminate between visual and auditory learners, each child is trained on several visual and auditory tasks matched for difficulty, and then a comparison is made of the rate of acquisition. Children who respond more accurately to the auditory stimuli and require fewer trials to reach criterion on auditory problems than on visual ones are labeled "auditory learners," and vice-versa for "visual learners." Once a reasonably stable learning pattern is determined, the children can then be assigned to intervention programs with the highest probability of success. Visual learners, for example, may be expected to progress more rapidly in sign training than in speech training.

Validated assessment procedures for identifying a variety of child learning characteristics are unfortunately not readily available. The development of appropriate assessment procedures and comparative research on how children with certain types of learning characteristics perform under different instructional strategies will aid in predicting the most effective instructional procedures for a given child.

Are There Mainstream Curriculum Targets Particularly Suited to Handicapped Children with Certain Characteristics and Behavior Patterns?

A child's success in a mainstream classroom depends not only on the acquisition of certain academic skills but also on the acquisition of identified "survival" skills -- i.e., the social and behavioral skills necessary to function successfully in the classroom. Curriculum goals thus should be comprised of skills which will ensure success for handicapped children in the current mainstream classroom as well as ensure success in future academic and social learning situations.

While a variety of curriculum models appear to include academic skills that are relevant for at least mildly handicapped mainstream children, the vast majority of available curricula do not appear to incorporate the target skills of social competency and classroom deportment. An example of this exclusion can be found in a recently published review of curriculum models for preschool mainstream programs. While social interaction and social competency were mentioned by the authors as important components of instruction, none of the curriculum models reviewed identified the social area for training. Classroom deportment target skills were also not mentioned in any descriptions of curriculum models.

The need for these skills has been frequently cited, however, in the educational literature. The Madison Early Childhood Program, for example, asked kindergarten teachers to list skills they thought handicapped children should be -- but were not -- able to display upon entering their classrooms. These skills were subdivided into the areas of pre-academic, language, social-survival, and motor. The largest number of skill deficits were reported in the social-survival category. More than twice as many social-survival skills than language or pre-academic skills were listed. The majority of the social-survival skills were not tested during kindergarten screening or during standardized developmental assessments.

Recently, several researchers have recognized the need to incorporate school survival skills into curricula. Most of this research has focused on identifying the skills necessary for successful mainstreaming and incorporating these target skills into curricula of current preschool programs for handicapped children. This approach has been described by several researchers as the "identification of the criteria of the next environment." While this emphasis on future educational environments should improve the quality of education for handicapped preschoolers and enhance the likelihood of successful transitions to future environments, there is a current need for curriculum development research to focus on curriculum targets for children already placed in mainstream programs.

The following teaching procedures may be used to achieve mainstream curriculum target skills.

* For academic competency:
  one-to-one instruction
  individualized small-group instruction
  individualized large-group instruction

interactive individualized instruction
peer-modeling
peer-tutoring

* For classroom deportment:
  positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior through contingent praise and attention
  peer-modeling with adult reinforcement
  token economies
  group contingency programs
  individual contingency contracting

* For social interaction:
  positive reinforcement of play or social behavior through contingent praise and attention
  selection of certain types of play equipment
  peer-modeling
  peer-mediated social-skills training
  direct training in sociodramatic play

SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Current assessment techniques, experimental designs, and ethical restrictions preclude a decisive answer to the question of the relative efficacy of mainstream versus developmentally segregated programming. Careful analyses are needed of the requisites for successful mainstreaming programs and the most relevant outcome indices. Specifically, the following questions require attention:

* What outcomes accrue to parents whose handicapped children are in mainstream settings?

* How do mildly handicapped students perceive their nonhandicapped classmates (as resources, as threats, neutrally?)

* What parent or family constellation variables affect the decision to enroll a handicapped child in a mainstreaming program?

* What long-term changes in attitudes and behavior are found in nonhandicapped children who have participated in preschool mainstream programs?

* How can handicapped children (particularly the physically handicapped) be taught to explain their disabilities to nonhandicapped peers?

* How do mildly handicapped students from mainstream programs perform on high school graduation competency tests in comparison with peers educated in special classes?

SUMMARY

As the above questions suggest, there is much to be learned about the processes and outcomes of mainstreaming. Like most educational innovations, mainstreaming at the preschool level began without a sound research base and without a careful analysis of procedures necessary to produce positive outcomes. In a time marked by ever-increasing calls for accountability and cost-efficiency, that is not a noble or promising history. Nor is it a history that must ordain the future. A good assessment of the status quo is the necessary precursor to change. With an understanding of children's behavior during and following a preschool mainstreaming experience, the next step -- generating sound evidence to answer many of the questions and issues addressed in this chapter -- can be taken.

That step will be costly and time-consuming. Today educators must compete with defense contractors, road builders, and waste management specialists for limited and limiting resources. If we fail to make the case for early education in this competitive marketplace, the questions surrounding mainstreaming of young handicapped children will never be answered.

In summary, we would reiterate that within a context of policy supporting the opportunity for children to be educated together regardless of handicap, the individual needs of children must be recognized. Our concern with child characteristics and outcomes related to mainstreaming applied to both handicapped and nonhandicapped children. The further examination of child variables, improvement of instructional formats and procedures, and refinement of curriculum targets should serve to benefit all children.

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Chapter 4

Parents and Preschool Mainstreaming

by Dorothy P. Cansler and Pam Winton

Chapter 4

Parents and Preschool Mainstreaming

In an effort to examine the current relationship between parents and mainstreaming, it is essential to realize that the emphases on parent involvement and mainstreaming as programmatic goals are fairly new. Therefore, only recently has attention been focused on the relationship between parent attitudes and mainstreaming as an intervention strategy. The literature has consisted primarily of position statements, program reports, and some studies at the Carolina Institute on Research in Early Education for the Handicapped (completed within the last three years by Turnbull, Blacher-Dixon, and Winton).

Preschool mainstreaming is not a monolithic entity; nor are parents a homogeneous population. Therefore, it is impossible to make generalizations that are valid for all programs or parents. Some differences that must be considered include: the range of program alternatives for mainstreaming, staff-child ratio, staff training, orientation of curriculum, availability of related services, program philosophy, host agencies, and sources of funding that may affect or dictate program direction. Since mainstreaming occurs most frequently in traditional settings where nonhandicapped children outnumber handicapped children, this chapter will focus on that type of situation.

In light of the recent emphases on mainstreaming and parent involvement and the limited amount of empirical information available, the information presented in this discussion has been drawn from a group of conference participants who pooled their knowledge from pertinent available research and their own clinical and personal experiences. In an effort to explore various dimensions of the relationship of parents to mainstreaming, several questions were examined by the conference participants. Since parents of both handicapped and nonhandicapped children are affected by mainstreaming and in turn affect the mainstreaming effort, the questions addressed both of these populations. Definitive answers are not presented; nor do answers appear in any order of importance. The issues or possible points of emphasis are presented for the reader's thoughtful consideration.

CONCERNS OF PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Concerns and impact of mainstreaming on parents can be classified into three general interrelated categories: those relating to the child, the staff, and the parents' own experiences.

About Their Child

Parents may want the socialization provided for their child by the mainstreaming experience yet fear that their child will be rejected by peers and regular education staff. Research indicates that parents who choose mainstreaming do so because they want their child to experience the "real world" through peer stimulation, modeling, and interaction (Turnbull & Winton, in press). However, the awareness of the possible pain for the child caused by exclusion, slurs, and labels may create for parents very real ambivalence in facing such placement decisions. Parents may also fear that the child's sensory or mental deficits may create frustration or failure when or if their child cannot keep up with his or her peers. The potential damage to the child's self image and sense of competence in such a situation means that parents may be faced with conflicting needs regarding the child. From the perspective of a parent of a handicapped child, mainstreaming can pose a major risk.

Many mainstream programs, especially regular day care or public schools, may offer fewer related services than do specialized

settings. Parents may be concerned that the mainstream option will deprive their child of the related services or appropriate physical environment necessary for the child to function optimally in the educational program.

Socialization, educational, and physical or medical needs may not all be met equally well in any one particular setting. Parents then are faced with the additional stress of having to establish a priority among all the needed and desired outcomes. Sometimes priorities the parents establish for their child's development may differ with priorities established by professionals. In such a situation, one parent noted that the additional stress brought about by the criticism or judgment from the professionals compounded the parent's problems. Poor decisions made by parents regarding nonhandicapped children are seldom given as harsh judgment as decisions regarding handicapped children.

In a study of 31 parents whose handicapped children were enrolled in either mainstream or integrated settings, Winton and Turnbull (1981) noted the impact on parents. One area of stress for parents was the adjustment period experienced by their children during the initial weeks of preschool enrollment. The types of problems associated with this adjustment period included other children's teasing, rejecting, or being afraid of the handicapped child, or the preschool teacher's being unaccustomed to having a handicapped child in his or her classroom. However, none of the parents in the study described these adjustment problems as drawbacks. Instead, they seemed to feel that these adjustments were resolved over time. Some parents felt that adjustments their child had to make in order to cope with the stress of the mainstream were best done at an early age.

Concerns About Staff

Parents of handicapped children have numerous concerns about staff in a mainstream situation. The ratio of staff to children, presence of specialists and consultants, and staff qualifications and attitudes have all been mentioned as variables of concern for parents. Turnbull and Winton (in press) found that parents of handicapped children cited the presence of unqualified teachers in the mainstream setting as the greatest drawback to mainstreaming.

The presence of an unqualified teacher has obvious implications for the child's instructional program, and it puts additional stress on the parents because they may be required to help the

teacher understand and serve the unique needs of the handicapped child. If the staff has had limited or no training or experience working with special children, the parent often cannot relax and feel confident that the educational and social needs of the child will be adequately addressed. One parent noted the stress of having to provide annual "in-service" training for her child's teachers and recommended that agencies begin to provide some training for teachers and more continuity in the child's experience.

Mainstream settings (traditional or reverse) usually have less staff per child than do special settings, and this will limit the amount of staff attention to both child and parent. In many specialized preschools, one staff member will be hired specifically to work with parents. Most public schools and regular mainstream settings have limited or few auxiliary staff for such endeavors. The situation further compounds the parents' concern when limited staff time must be balanced against the need for more assistance for the inexperienced or untrained teacher.

Attitude of the staff is perhaps the most crucial concern parents have regarding the staff of a mainstream setting. Since parents are aware that in the mainstream setting most staff members have not elected to serve handicapped children, there is a natural uneasiness about the staff attitude toward the handicapped child.

Concerns About Their Own Needs

Mainstreaming may present more problems for parents of handicapped children than for the handicapped youngsters themselves. The extra time commitment required of parents of handicapped children in the traditional mainstream setting has been frequently noted. For parents whose regular and routine family responsibilities require additional time because of the handicapped child, the additional depletion (due to participation in a mainstream program) of a limited resource such as time can prove quite stressful. Extra time may be required for the following activities: coordinating special services not provided in the mainstream setting; orienting the staff to the child's unique needs and doing in-service training with regular teachers whose skills for working with handicapped children are limited (some parents experience a burn-out situation as they face doing this job every year with a new teacher); providing supplemental instruction at home when the child is unable to keep up in school; helping the child's relationships with nonhandicapped peers through participating in the

classroom or through planning and implementing out-of-school socialization experiences; and acting as an interpreter and advocate for the child's needs in terms of program funding or allocation of resources. Furthermore, a feeling of separation or even an adversarial relationship may develop between parents of handicapped and parents of nonhandicapped children.

With these additional demands on time, it is not surprising that some parents of handicapped children have been less than enthusiastic about volunteering in the class or responding to offers of training so they can work with their child at home (Winton & Turnbull, 1981).

Parents who feel a mainstream program may be appropriate for their young handicapped child may find that locating regular preschools willing to accept handicapped children is a difficult task. With the exception of Head Start, publicly supported mainstream preschools are limited. In most communities, there is no one person or place where parents can go to learn about private preschools receptive to handicapped children. Some parents have reported that searching for a mainstream preschool can be a lengthy and painful process (Winton, Turnbull & Blacher, in press).

Mainstreaming a handicapped child can cause a change in parental perception or attitude toward the child. One parent commented: "Though I've known Ann was handicapped since birth, as long as she was in a program with other handicapped children, I never really had to face it. Seeing her with normal children this year hit me very hard. I really saw how far she was from the rest of the children."

Though such changes in perception may be initially painful for the parent, a more realistic perception of the child's functioning can enable parents to have more appropriate expectations and can also serve to motivate the parent to help the child acquire new skills. On the other hand, some parents may tend to become discouraged by the daily reminder of their child's differences and tend to withdraw and begin a downward spiral of discouragement and lowered expectations. The need of all parents to perceive their child positively and to perceive themselves as adequate parents is accentuated for parents of the newly mainstreamed.

The support system for parents in the mainstream differs from that available in the specialized setting. Professionals who have not been trained in special education may not be as empathetic or understanding of the additional stress the handicapped child

places on the family. Awareness of community resources and materials for the family may also be limited. Any diminution of professional skills and attitudes as parents move from a specialized to a mainstream setting will be experienced as a loss of support. While such staff differences unquestionably have implications for the child, it must be noted that there is also significant impact on the parent's sense of security.

Parent-to-parent support has long been recognized as one of the most valuable aspects of parent involvement programs. The sharing of concerns, useful resources, and helpful tips has provided enormous support to many parents in their early years of adjustment to the presence of a handicapped child. Such groups can help parents resolve their personal feelings about parenting a handicapped child and acquire appropriate expectations and skills to help their child. The removal of such support in a mainstream setting would be strongly felt.

In a traditional mainstream setting, the parents of handicapped children and the parents of nonhandicapped children will share some but not all concerns. The sharing may be a positive experience for the parents of the handicapped children, but their recognition of unshared concerns may exacerbate their feelings of alienation and loneliness.

Turnbull and Blacher-Dixon (1980) cite one parent who had stopped going to parent meetings because of tremendous frustration. She attended a meeting planned by the parents of nonhandicapped children that was entitled "The Independent Three-Year-Old." As others sought means of tempering their child's bounding eagerness to make singular decisions and assume household responsibilities, she stated, "I silently wept, yet wanted to scream out and let them know how I would give anything for similar problems."

Professionals may find that parents, as well as their handicapped children, at times need exposure to and acceptance by the mainstream; but they also need support from other parents whose concerns and experiences more nearly match their own. Programming for such parents may mean fostering a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" identification opportunity for the parents.

In summary, it has been noted that mainstreaming has a number of aspects that may elicit either salutary or problematic experiences for parents of handicapped children. Clearly, program variables and parental differences mean that the same phenomenon is not experienced by each parent. On balance, however, the scales

seem somewhat tipped against the parents' needs being met. In In light of this trend, perhaps the most notable issue professionals should recognize is the possible parent-child conflict of interest. The best placement for the child may not be the most satisfactory for the parent. Professionals may need to support parents by helping them recognize and validate their own needs; this may be an integral factor in long-term planning for the family.

CONCERNS OF PARENTS OF NONHANDICAPPED CHILDREN

The research on perspectives parents of nonhandicapped children have toward mainstreaming is limited, and the results are mixed. A majority of the public school parents surveyed in a 1979 Gallup Poll favored placing mentally handicapped children in special rather than regular classrooms. However, a survey of parents of nonhandicapped children in mainstream kindergarten classrooms by Turnbull, Winton, Blacher, and Salkind (in press) did not document a negative backlash. Rather, results indicated that parents felt the greatest drawbacks to mainstreaming were those affecting handicapped children; they also felt the greatest benefit was that mainstreaming helped their own nonhandicapped children learn about the differences in human growth and development. Perhaps parents of kindergarten-aged children have more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming because they feel their children are young enough to be receptive to differences and can learn acceptance before prejudice. Age of the mainstreamed children is certainly an important variable when considering parent concerns.

Concerns About Their Child

Two child-related concerns have been mentioned by parents of nonhandicapped youngsters: fears that their child will imitate undesirable behaviors of handicapped peers, and fears that the presence of the handicapped children might disrupt the class or require extra time that would result in an interference with their own child's education. The severity of the handicapping condition or the presence of disruptive behaviors in the handicapped children would certainly be factors affecting the extent to which the parents of the nonhandicapped children would experience these concerns.

As mentioned earlier, the survey by Turnbull, Winton, Blacher, and Salkind suggests that parents perceive the impact of mainstreaming on their nonhandicapped children to be positive rather than negative.

Concerns About Staff

The emphasis on parental involvement mandated by P.L. 94-142 has the potential to change the nature of the relationship between school staff and all parents. Issues related to standardized testing, nature of the curriculum, teacher skills and attitudes, and appropriate classroom placement concern all parents. As a result of the mandates of P.L. 94-142, regular teachers will likely become skilled at conducting IEP-type conferences. These skills are likely to benefit nonhandicapped children and their parents. Supplemental resources provided for the benefit of handicapped children in the classroom (such as teacher aides) are also likely to favorably affect the climate for all children.

On the other hand, in reverse mainstreaming (where nonhandicapped children are placed in special settings with handicapped children), special education teachers may have low expectations or a teaching style which does not meet the needs of the nonhandicapped children. In addition, there may be limited attention paid to creative activities such as dramatic presentations. If the ratio of handicapped to nonhandicapped children is too great, there may be a limited number of stimulating peers with whom the nonhandicapped can interact. Lack of creative activities and absence of stimulating playmates were drawbacks to specialized preschools identified by some parents of handicapped children interviewed by Winton (Winton, Turnbull & Blacher, in press). In the sense that reverse mainstreaming is "specialized" for the handicapped, the same criticisms may be valid there for parents of the nonhandicapped.

Concerns About Their Own Needs

Though some parents of nonhandicapped children may never become involved or interested in the mainstreaming program in their child's classroom, those who do may experience certain benefits. Exposure to handicapped children may create interest and desire for information about handicapped children that may broaden these parents' understanding of individual differences. This exposure may even create some advocates for handicapped children's rights

among the nonhandicapped population. Through contact with the parents of handicapped children, some parents of nonhandicapped children may become aware of the common bond of joy and love of their children so that both sets of parents feel more akin to each other.

Some parents of mainstreamed handicapped children report that in some cases parents of nonhandicapped children initially seem uncomfortable and awkward around them. One parent stated:

> When I first started taking Stephanie to Cloverleaf Preschool, it was a little unusual because I felt like most of the parents didn't speak to me. It was like they were afraid to get involved in a conversation with me, or they really didn't know how to deal with the situation.
>
> (Winton, Turnbull & Blacher, in press)

In addition, mainstreaming may force parents to answer their nonhandicapped children's questions about handicapping conditions. If parents lack information necessary to answer such questions, they may feel inadequate or awkward. Professionals should be alert to ways they can overcome initial awkwardness and facilitate information sharing between parents in mainstream situations.

In summary, mainstreaming presents to parents of nonhandicapped children a number of challenges in terms of adapting themselves and helping their children adapt to individual differences. The potential benefits for all children and for society as a whole were stated in a recent publication edited by Stixrud (1982):

> I think we always need to keep in mind that it's not just the special needs children that are benefiting from this -- the other children benefit just as much. If we could rear a generation of people who would not turn their heads when they meet somebody on the street who looks a little different from themselves or who walks in a particular kind of gait, I think it would be a great humanitarian step ahead. I would like to see mainstreaming really be thought about in terms of developing an attitude within the teachers and thereby within the children -- of a general acceptance of people who have special needs.

Helping those teachers, children, and parents in mainstream settings best meet the challenge is one of the most important mainstreaming issues.

STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING MAINSTREAMING

Two kinds of parent-oriented strategies for facilitating mainstreaming can be described -- those that are initiated by programs to help parents, and those that can be initiated by parents to help programs. A further distinction can be made between those strategies that focus on preparation for entering a mainstream setting and those that might be used in an ongoing fashion throughout the school year.

Strategies for Preparing for the Mainstream

Since parents and children undergo an initial period of adjustment when a child is placed in a mainstream setting, practitioners should consider ways to prepare all those who will be involved.

*Eliminate anxiety about a new experience by providing advance information.

One strategy for sharing information is to schedule an orientation meeting with all parents before the preschool year begins. The parent of a visually impaired child described the effect such an introductory meeting had when her preschool son was mainstreamed. The meeting was held in the spring before her son's enrollment in the fall. At this meeting the teachers told the parent group that one of the incoming preschoolers was visually impaired and that his mother was happy to answer any questions about him. Only a few questions were asked then, but the teachers reported that during their home visits over the summer every parent brought up the subject. The advantage of letting the parents of the nonhandicapped children know in advance that a handicapped child would be in the class was that it gave them a chance to air their concerns, to gather information, and to prepare their children for the experience. An important part of this process was that the staff felt comfortable with the situation and was able to convey that to concerned parents. Another factor that made this

strategy successful was that books for children and adults about visual impairments were available over the summer and during the fall for thos who were interested.

Preparing the staff by providing them with information on the child's handicapping condition and the resulting educational implications is a critical factor in getting ready. The logical time for this to be done is during the IEP conference. However, for parents residing in states without mandated preschool education for handicapped children, the impetus for such information sharing between the preschool staff, the parents, and other specialists who know the child well may have to come from parents. Specific strategies to help parents prepare for IEP or IEP-like conferences are provided in Winton, Turnbull and Blacher (in press).

*Smooth the way by acquainting the handicapped child with the preschool environment and what will be expected of him or her.

Arranging a visit to the classroom and introducing activities at home that are part of the preschool routine are ways to prepare the handicapped child for preschool. For instance, if lining up to go outside or sitting quietly in a chair and listening are behaviors expected in the classroom, practicing those activities at home will make the classroom routine easier to learn. If the handicapped child has behaviors that obviously will present problems in the classroom, working on them before the school year begins might prevent "failure." Having teachers share with parents the techniques they will use to handle these behaviors can help parents decide on approaches to take at home.

Parents may want to help prepare their handicapped child for interacting with peers by initiating some get-togethers before school begins. Inviting another child over for ice cream or for a trip to the park is a way of making sure there is a familiar face when school begins and may give the handicapped child experience in fielding questions related to his or her handicap. Parents may want to engage in role play with their child, acting out potential or past unpleasant experiences, alternative responses, and useful behavior.

Strategies for Providing Ongoing Support in the Mainstream

Constant monitoring and evaluation are necessary in order to provide ongoing support, with consideration of the following questions: Are goals being met? Is social interaction between handicapped and nonhandicapped children taking place? Does the environment need to be adapted to better meet needs? Are teachers, children, and parents receiving the necessary support to reach the program's chosen goals?

*Teachers may need the support of specialists, materials, aides, information, or extra encouragement.

The parents of a blind child described their actions in obtaining special help for their child's teacher:

> Their son, enrolled in a private preschool in a state without mandated preschool services, very much needed the services of an occupational therapist. Neither the school nor the parents could afford such a specialist on a weekly basis. Through the local university, the parents contacted a student teacher interested in special education, who (because their son's preschool teacher was state-certified) was able to do her student teaching at the private preschool. The parents then hired an occupational specialist on an intermittent basis to train both the teacher and the student teacher in certain therapy techniques and to provide follow-up evaluation. In this unique case, teacher, student teacher, parents, handicapped child, and nonhandicapped classmates all benefited from the parents' creative response to a problem.

*Parents can monitor their handicapped child's support needs through classroom observation and conversations with their child.

Peer rejection and teasing and inability to participate in certain activities because of access difficulties or modality impairment may occur. The mother of a visually impaired child described her son's participation at group music time:

> Because he wasn't aware of the body movements which accompanied the songs, the boy's participation was limited. Working with him at home with the same songs enhanced his enjoyment of this activity. After this brief training period, he understood why everyone giggled at certain points in the songs and was able to feel part of the gaiety.

*Handicapped children need the support of spending time with other handicapped children.

A parent whose five-year-old physically handicapped son had formerly been mainstreamed but was at that point attending a special school for cerebral palsied children gave this reason for the change in schools:

> He's pretty young to be the only one different. He needs to see a lot of people like himself doing a lot of productive things before he can forge out there and be Crusader Rabbit.
>
> (Winton, Turnbull & Blacher, in press)

For the child who is mainstreamed, having chances outside of school to be with children with similar limitations may help the child develop a clearer idea of his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

Another way of helping children understand handicaps (others' as well as their own) is through stories, books, puppets, and films about handicaps. Parents may have such resources that they can introduce to teachers for use in the classroom.

*Parents Need the Support of Opportunities to Interact with the Program.

Monthly parent coffees, potluck dinners, and school newsletters are ways of building communication among parents. Providing skill training on topics with practical application to all childre (such as behavior management) is another way programs can help integrate parents. It is important that parents of handicapped children have opportunities to serve on parent committees whose decisions affect handicapped children. The mother of a physically handicapped preschooler made use of such an opportunity:

> The parent playground committee at her daughter's cooperatrive playschool was in charge of buying new outdoor equipment. Until this mother raised the issue, the committee never thought about purchasing adaptive equipment that her daughter could use.

Parents of young handicapped children prefer to be involved in programs through opportunities to talk frequently and informally with their child's preschool teacher (Winton & Turnbull, 1981). A give-and-take relationship between professionals and parents may be one of the critical ways in which ongoing support is generated and focused in mainstream settings. Clearly, there are no proven formulae nor foolproof methods for ensuring the success of a mainstream experience; but open communication may be the critical mechanism by which various strategies are matched with arising needs.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Any discussion of future directions must take into account the peculiar situation in which parents of handicapped children have been placed because of the inconsistencies in policy makers' messages regarding their child's education. Parents have been told that handicapped children should live with their families and receive community-based treatment. They have been told that this treatment must begin as early as possible to be most effective. Public Law 94-142 states that the education of handicapped children should take place in the least restrictive environment. The policy emphasis on concepts such as deinstitutionalization and mainstreaming have shifted the burden of caring for handicapped children from the professional community to family members. Yet because of budget cutbacks, parents are receiving less support as they attempt to care for and educate their child in the mainstream.

The mother of a moderately handicapped preschooler whose handicap resulted from premature birth commented that she found it ironic that our society invests in the finest modern medical technology to save the lives of tiny premature babies yet is unwilling to allocate funds for the finest educational opportunities and adequate support to families struggling to enhance those children's growth and development.

Professionals and parents must encourage decision makers to allocate resources to support parents and help alleviate the identified areas of stress associated with mainstreaming. Specific recommendations include the following:

* Alleviate the stress associated with searching for an appropriate mainstream school. A single community agency should be responsible for compiling information on area preschools that could be disseminated to various parent organizations, clinics, and professionals in contact with families of handicapped preschoolers.

* Provide more special education support and training to early childhood regular education teachers so that parents will not have to conduct in-service training. Teacher training programs may need to be expanded from four to five years, and systematic in-service programs for teachers must be developed that provide information on handicapping conditions, educational implications, analyzing tasks, individualizing instruction, and conducting parent-teacher-specialists conferences. In addition, specialists and aides should be available to teachers.

* Help parents find out about and coordinate the various community services available to handicapped children. A community clearinghouse could be established where parents could obtain this kind of information. In addition, other parents of handicapped children could serve as advocates or case managers and help newer parents negotiate the system.

Directions for Research

Many of the parents of young handicapped children who select a mainstream preschool for their child do so because they believe the exposure will prepare their child for the "real world." Longitudinal data are lacking which could address questions related to this assumption, such as:

* Do mainstreamed preschoolers remain in mainstream educational settings in upper grades?

* Do adjustment periods to new mainstream settings lessen in intensity or disappear as the mainstreamed child moves through the educational system?

* In what way are parents' values related to the choice to mainstream?

* Do nonhandicapped children who experience mainstreaming at the preschool level demonstrate an increased understanding and tolerance of differences? Do their parents?

* Do parents of nonhandicapped children who experience mainstreaming demonstrate advocacy on behalf of the handicapped as a result of their child's experience?

Until information is available that can help answer such questions, parents who are choosing mainstreaming for their child's sake and perhaps sacrificing attention to some of their own needs in the process may be operating under false assumptions about the benefits of mainstreaming.

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